



Convention on the
Rights of the Child

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 596th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 14 January 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. OUEDRAOGO

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Second periodic report of Costa Rica (continued)

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GE.00-40304 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Second periodic report of Costa Rica (CRC/C/65/Add.7); written replies of Costa Rica to questions raised in the list of issues (document without a symbol, distributed in the meeting room in Spanish only)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Costa Rica took places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. SANABRIA (Costa Rica) said that the Boards for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, which had been referred to at the preceding meeting, were composed of officials of the National Children's Trust and the Ministry of Public Education, as well as of representatives of local government and a minor aged between 15 and 18. The Monitoring Committees for the Protection of Children and Adolescents were composed of members of the community organized in small groups. The documents distributed by his delegation contained a leaflet describing the national system for the protection of children and adolescents, including the Boards for the Protection of Children and Adolescents and the Monitoring Committees in question, as well as the chapter of the Penal Code on sexual offences. Statistics had also been made available to the Committee on births in the country, according to province and the mother's marital status, and they showed an increase in the number of very young girls having children.
3. Depending on the children's reactions, the authorities carried out regular reviews of the way in which information on the rights of the child were presented, particularly those provided for in the Convention, but there was no machinery for direct consultation with children. The suggestion made in that regard by one member of the Committee would be transmitted to the Costa Rican authorities.
4. In respect of the treatment of children in judicial proceedings, national legislation required the courts to take account of the specific needs of children, who were assisted by specially trained technical staff. There was never any direct confrontation between a child and his aggressor.
5. As far as the protection of children was concerned, he referred to the campaign launched in 1999 under the auspices of the Office of the President to protect children from drugs, as well as to the campaign to combat the sexual exploitation of children, which would begin in February 2000 and would be reported on by the print and audio-visual media.
6. In connection with measures taken or planned to ensure access for remote and underprivileged communities to basic services, such as clean drinking water and sanitation (question 11 of the list of issues), he said that the Government had formulated large-scale projects for least developed areas on the Atlantic coast and created children's clubs for the protection of water resources.
7. As part of the Government's national solidarity policy, various projects had been launched - including one which was being implemented in the three regions of the north, the

Atlantic coast and the Pacific coast, where socio-economic conditions continued to be precarious - for the purpose of lowering the infant mortality rate by 2 per cent per year. Anti-drug campaigns had also been relaunched in those regions.

8. With regard to question 12 relating, *inter alia*, to teenage pregnancies, he noted that there were three projects, the first of which had been started several years previously as part of a national health system programme to care for children and adolescents at social risk and covered all aspects of adolescent health. The two others, "Amor Joven" and "Construyendo Oportunidades", which had been launched by the Office of the President in 1998 and 1999, respectively, were based on themes such as sexual education and reintegration into the educational system.

9. In 1999, the legislature had also adopted a provision which created an additional tax on tobacco and alcohol and was designed to finance various social welfare programmes on behalf of teenage mothers and mothers-to-be.

10. With regard to the protection of disabled children (question 13), several hundred specialized classes and some 50 vocational training agencies had been created under the Programme for the Protection of the Rights of Disabled Children and Adolescents.

11. The Social Development and Family Allowance Fund (question 14), whose establishment had made it possible to finance social welfare programmes, would undergo administrative restructuring with a view to improving its effectiveness while it continued to pursue the same objectives.

12. As to question 15, the Costa Rican authorities had been working to guarantee pre-school education for all children in the country, to expand the teaching of foreign languages and information technology, to strengthen the scholarship programme, to improve textbooks and the psychological approach of students, to increase the teaching staff and to provide more resources for education. The educational level of the entire population had improved as a result of the adoption of those measures.

13. Mr. DOEK, referring to table 7 of the report showing the number of births to adolescent mothers, said that he was alarmed by the increase that had taken place from 1990 to 1996, particularly for mothers aged between 15 and 19 years, and would like to have an explanation of those figures. Were pregnant teenagers able to have abortions and, if so, how was that option presented to them?

14. Did the Social Development and Family Allowance Fund pay resources to needy families directly and, if so, why were there still so many children living in poverty in the country? He also asked about the increase in recent years in the number of disabled persons, which was referred to in paragraph 186 of the report.

15. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked whether Costa Rica had set up a psychological support programme to deal with the problem of violence and, in view of the increase in domestic violence and Costa Rica's statement that psychological intervention was a priority, what the ratio of the number of psychologists to the population and the number of doctors to the number of

patients was. That programme seemed to be effective and it would be good to know whether the Children's Ombudsman was dealing with new cases involving persons without access to priority care programmes.

16. Costa Rica indicated that it had psychological support programmes for children suffering from emotional problems, but the lack of statistics on the number of such children was regrettable.

17. Since statistics showed that 6 per cent of children were born to single mothers and that the number of pregnant teenagers continued to increase, she would like to have some information on the effectiveness of the programmes already under way and on possible evaluation studies. Information on sex education programmes would also be welcome because of the large proportion of single adolescent girls giving birth to children in Costa Rica.

18. She would like to have up-to-date figures on the number of people contaminated by pesticides, especially children in rural areas, and asked how the Government intended to deal with that problem.

19. The breastfeeding programme appeared to be working well, but the organizations in charge of it were having difficulties gaining access to hospitals to train mothers. An authorization was necessary and there appeared to be administrative problems. Might measures be taken to facilitate such access? It was regrettable that the organization responsible for promoting breastfeeding was not represented in the National Children's Trust. What action did that organization have to take to remedy that oversight? What means should be taken to overcome the reluctance of hospitals and staff members to let mothers and children be together after childbirth?

20. Mr. RABAH asked how many school drop-outs there had been in 1995 (table 3 of the report) and what measures had been taken by the Government to combat that problem, which could lead to delinquency and unemployment.

21. He noted with satisfaction that Costa Rica had adopted new legislation on adoption, but would like to have some information on the implementation of the 1993 Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption.

22. Mrs. KARP asked whether the Government of Costa Rica intended to prohibit corporal punishment by law, including at home, and wage a campaign to change the population's attitude and teach other measures. She had been given to understand that such practices would be prohibited at school and wished to know whether there had been complaints about corporal punishment and what the authorities' reaction had been. What did Costa Rica think of countries which had opted for such a legal prohibition of that type of practice?

23. With regard to the family environment, she asked what remedies were possible against decisions by social welfare authorities, especially when a child was taken away from its family or placed in an institution or a psychiatric facility. Could the family appeal against such a decision and, if so, what was the procedure and what possibilities were available to the child?

She also wished to know how much time was needed to determine what type of placement was best for a child removed from the custody of its family and whether special assistance was offered to single-parent families.

24. She asked whether there was a national plan of action for the elimination of violence at school and, if so, to what extent children took part. Were guidelines given to schools and institutions to help dyslexic children, what approach was adopted and were there special examinations and special institutions?

25. It would be useful to know whether a general study had been done on the specific health problems of adolescents from the point of view of the establishment of services, particularly guidance and counselling services.

26. Mrs. RILANTONO asked whether the fact that 40 per cent of children were born to single mothers (table 14 of the core document) was explained by the country's cultural specificity or by the influence of a system of values that was becoming globalized.

27. She wished to know what percentage of the budget the Government spent on education. Noting that many drop-outs occurred between primary and secondary school, she asked whether the causes of that problem had been analysed in Costa Rica and whether it might be attributable to an imbalance in school curricula.

28. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether Costa Rica had awareness-raising campaigns to encourage families to enrol their children in the pre-school system and to explain the importance of that type of schooling.

29. She would like to have additional information on the problem of sexual harassment at school. Costa Rica had adopted legislative and administrative measures, but what happened in practice? Might there be a connection between the high drop-out rate and sexual harassment? What did Costa Rica intend to do to deal with that situation?

30. With regard to juvenile criminal justice, there was a glaring contradiction between institutionalization, legislation and the administrative measures which had been taken, on the one hand, and the problems which continued to exist, on the other. Had there been any change since the drafting of the report?

The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.25 p.m.

31. Mr. SANABRIA (Costa Rica) confirmed that there had been a sharp increase in the number of teenage pregnancies in Costa Rica and that they were expected to rise in 2000. Teenage mothers received full care in health facilities. At present, the trend was towards reintegration in the educational system or towards planning for the future. It was a recent development that pregnant teenagers were no longer excluded from the educational system, but cultural prejudices still existed and there were many drop-outs.

32. Various psycho-sociological and socio-historical studies showed that many mothers were heads of household and had children outside wedlock. The change taking place in the system of

values and the socio-economic model at the international level seemed to influence lifestyles, with the result that women were having children later. In the past 25 years, priority had been given to breastfeeding and better nutrition. Costa Rica had fought against some transnational corporations such as Nestlé, which produced substitute foods and advocated bottle-feeding. The separation of newborns and mothers was a traditional practice in Costa Rican hospitals, but the bond between them was maintained at all times.

33. Abortion was totally prohibited in Costa Rica out of respect for life as from the time of conception. Teenage mothers from underprivileged backgrounds benefited from assistance and, where necessary, could decide on the best option for the adoption of their children.

34. With regard to alternative protection, the child must, to the extent possible, remain with its family. Where that was not possible, he was entrusted to a member of the extended family or placed in a home or an institution. There was a programme of subsidies for foster homes. The NGOs which ran those homes had 5,000 beds for the temporary care of children. The alternative to foster care was adoption, which was possible after a child abandonment declaration had been made. When that solution was chosen, the right of the child to a nationality had to be respected and priority was therefore given to national adoption.

35. Referring to violence, he said that campaigns against domestic violence and violence in general had been going on for only 10 years and had resulted in an increase in the number of complaints of intra-family violence, particularly for the corporal punishment of children. Corporal punishment was part of Costa Rica's culture and was used as a teaching method in schools, with the parents' consent. In recent years, there had been discussions about that practice, which was nevertheless heavily criticized, as shown by the increase in the number of complaints by children and adolescents against teachers and principals for corporal punishment, psychological ill-treatment and arbitrary measures. From May 1998 to May 1999, the Children's Ombudsman had dealt with 120 individual complaints.

36. In view of the rise in the number of complaints by children about violence at school and in the family, activities were being carried out, particularly in schools, to inform children of their rights. Two free telephone numbers, which could be called 24 hours a day, seven days a week, had been made available for emergencies.

37. With regard to medical services, about which statistics would be communicated later, he recalled that the public health system covered 95 per cent of the population and that there was a very large number of doctors and psychologists. Children, regardless of nationality, benefited from special programmes and completely free health care. There were no specific data on disabled children, but activities were organized for them by the Ministry of Health in cooperation with international agencies. In addition, epidemiological monitoring programmes were being carried out in high-risk areas, particularly those where children worked.

38. The Social Development and Family Allowance Fund, whose resources came from income tax, was used to finance assistance programmes for small enterprises and cooperatives run by women heads of household, as well as programmes for housing construction and assistance to needy families. The beneficiaries were usually designated by the competent bodies or had requested assistance directly.

39 Although it was an example for Latin America, the quality of education in the Costa Rican system had not always been good, and that had led to a decline in school attendance. Particular measures had been taken, *inter alia*, to improve the quality of textbooks and teaching methods, to train teachers and to strengthen infrastructures. Studies on drop-outs indicated that socio-economic conditions were not the only cause and that factors such as the interest of children in studies and the difficulties they encountered, as well as possibilities of access to educational establishments, played an important role. Violence at school did not seem to be the main cause of dropping out. In that connection, the increase in the number of complaints filed in connection with cases of harassment and ill-treatment by teachers or other students gave a better idea of the situation that would facilitate the adoption of harsh countermeasures.

40 The Ministry of Justice had taken steps concerning alternatives for prison terms applicable to juvenile delinquents. For minors below the age of criminal majority (12 years), the National Children's Trust was responsible for providing social and psychological assistance. In addition to prevention activities and the opening of a juvenile detention centre, various measures had been taken to establish a specialized court and to ensure that all cases of offences committed by minors were heard by juvenile judges so that the best interests of the child were always taken into consideration.

41 Mr. DOEK, noting that the report did not contain any data on cases of torture and police brutality and that the Children's and Adolescent's Code did not clearly prohibit such practices, asked who children could turn to to file a complaint, if necessary. He also wished to know what was happening with the implementation of the new Juvenile Criminal Justice Act and the measures referred to in paragraph 165 of the report. In that connection, he considered that the three-day time limit for appealing a ruling was much too short and would like some explanations about it. He also asked whether there were any special programmes to combat child prostitution and whether bilateral agreements had been concluded with other Governments to put an end to sex tourism. What on-the-spot measures were being taken to monitor child labour and did Costa Rica intend to ratify ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour?

42 Mrs. KARP asked what remedies were available to children to challenge an administrative decision concerning their placement, how long a child had to wait before being placed and what problems arose in that regard. She also wished to know whether the Government was going to try again to have legislation enacted to prohibit the exploitation of children for pornographic purposes.

43 With regard to juvenile justice, she asked whether there were any juvenile courts outside the capital and police units specializing in inquiries relating to children. She would like to know how many juvenile detention centres there were and what kind of training activities were provided for the staff, particularly in respect of psychological monitoring. Because of the large percentage of children in pre-trial detention, she had some doubts about the objectivity of the criteria used to determine whether a minor's conduct was dangerous enough for him to be put on trial. She also wished to know how Costa Rica went from theory to practice in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, what that actually represented for social workers and juvenile judges, for example, and whether the measures taken had led to changes in the daily lives of children.

44. Mrs. MOKHUANE, noting that the statistics showed an increase in the number of persons with drug and alcohol problems, asked whether there were any psychological treatment and reintegration programmes for such persons. According to outside sources, moreover, disabled persons still had difficulties in gaining access to some buildings, including school buildings, and it would be helpful to know the delegation's opinion on that point. She also asked whether any progress was being made on the dialogue between the representatives of official departments responsible for promoting breastfeeding and their NGO counterparts.

45. Mr. RABAH, welcoming the setting up of telephone hotlines enabling children to report cases of abuse, said that he would like to have statistics on how many complaints of that kind had been made. He would also like to have information on street children, a problem about which the report said nothing.

46. He asked whether juvenile delinquents could benefit from reintegration and post-prison assistance services, whether they had access to legal assistance in detention centres, whether they were kept separately from adults while awaiting trial and whether the persons they had to deal with in the juvenile justice system were properly trained.

47. Mr. SANABRIA (Costa Rica) said that, so far, juveniles were still tried by ordinary courts, but the plan to establish a juvenile court would take shape in 2000. One of the greatest challenges the Ministry of Justice had faced had been to establish the material and legal infrastructure to bring Costa Rica into line both with the Convention and with its new Children's and Adolescent's Code.

48. Minors were kept separately from adults in all cases. Great progress had been made in recent years. The tendency was thus to impose penalties to replace deprivation of freedom. Moreover, persons in conflict with the law and persons who were a risk to society, such as street children, who had previously been held together in the same place, were now detained in separate premises. The consideration of a complaint about conditions of detention took two to three months.

49. In reply to Mr. Doek, he confirmed that unlike the offence of police brutality, the offence of torture was not provided for in the legislation. Although torture was not common in Costa Rica, some cases had unfortunately been reported. One of the best known was now being tried for the second time, after the first trial had ended in the release of the offenders and the first judgement had been overturned by the Court of Cassation. Costa Rica was a party to the Convention against Torture.

50. The institution with which complaints were to be filed was indicated not in the Children's Code, but in the enabling legislation. Complaints had to be filed with the Prosecutor's Office, either directly or through the National Children's Trust.

51. The figure of 3,000 children subjected to sexual exploitation in the capital, which had been quoted by Mr. Doek, seemed realistic and even slightly low. A pilot project to help street children by offering them group therapy and alternative activities was now underway, but the Government's main work in that area was to negotiate bilateral agreements with other

Governments to enable them to try their nationals for acts of sex tourism committed on Costa Rican soil. The production of pornographic material was an offence under the Penal Code, unlike mere possession of such material, on which legislation still had to be drafted.

52 With regard to child labour, ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour was being considered in parliament and a department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security was in charge of ensuring that enterprises respected labour legislation, which prohibited the hiring of children aged under 15. When they found that an offence had been committed, the inspectors from that department could file a complaint directly with the Prosecutor's Office. There was also a national plan to combat child labour.

53 Many campaigns to prevent alcohol and drug abuse were being carried out in schools and colleges. A law under which new taxes would be levied on tobacco and alcohol specifically in order to finance prevention programmes had been adopted in December 1999.

54 Mr. DOEK thanked the delegation for its frankness in not denying that problems continued to exist, especially in rural areas and on the outskirts of large towns, and that health and education services were not always available to all children. The other main subjects of concern were street children and the increase in the sexual exploitation of children. The list of measures taken by the Government, particularly legislative measures, was impressive, but emphasis must now be placed on their practical application.

55 The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Government of Costa Rica for the great efforts it had made and for having supported the amendment of article 43 of the Convention to increase the number of members of the Committee from 10 to 18. She encouraged the Government to continue its efforts to reduce the gap between theory and practice, invited it to publish the report under consideration and the conclusions of the Committee's work, which would be communicated to it shortly, and expressed the hope that, for the consideration of Costa Rica's next report, the delegation would not be composed exclusively of men.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.



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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 17 January 2000 at 10 a.m.

Chairperson Mrs. OUEDRAOGO

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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (*continued*)

Initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

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GE.00-40308 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (CRC/C/8/Add.36)
(HRI/CORE/1/Add.83; CRC/C/Q/MAC/1; written replies to questions raised in the list of issues and addendum to the written replies (documents with no symbol, distributed in the meeting room in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that as a successor State to the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, his country had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993. The Convention had been among the first international treaties to be so ratified, although its main principles had been incorporated into domestic legislation for many decades, and were therefore directly applicable. The Government attached particular importance to the adoption of measures to implement the Convention more effectively within its existing capacity and in accordance with the funds available. He noted that his Government would in the very near future consider the possibility of withdrawing its reservation to article 9 of the Convention.

3. The initial report (CRC/C/8/Add.36) focused on the legal, administrative and judicial measures taken by the country in implementing the Convention; emphasis had been placed on the legal framework. The information provided was intended to show how the Convention was applied in general and to comply with the Committee's request for information on specific cases of implementation of legislation in specific instances.

4. Since the submission of the initial report improvements had been made in adapting the national legal framework to meet the requirements of the Convention. A new Ombudsman on Children's Rights had been established in 1999, the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. Since its introduction, the Office of the Ombudsman on Children's Rights had already undertaken steps to publicize its activities throughout the country and had begun work on particular cases. He noted that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was the only country in the region with such an institution.

5. During the past few years, the Government had made considerable progress in areas affecting children. For example, there had been a 55 per cent reduction in the infant mortality rate, from more than 31 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 16 per 1,000 live births in 1998. The rate of immunization against such diseases as tuberculosis, measles and polio remained high, with over 86 per cent of all children covered. Also worthy of mention were the virtual elimination of iodine deficiency disorders, the reduction of the maternal mortality rate, breastfeeding promotion activities and the promotion of psychosocial development for children in vulnerable groups. Ninety-five per cent of all school-aged children attended primary school and, although secondary education was not compulsory, the schooling rate had increased in the past five years to nearly 85 per cent. The greatest increase had been among the Albanian population, whose enrolment

rates had quadrupled. Likewise, an "interactive learning" project had been set up. Finally, alternatives to institutional care had been promoted and national campaigns had been launched against HIV/AIDS and drug addiction.

6 It should, however, be emphasized that his country was in the midst of a transition period; its economic and political prosperity had been adversely affected by the unstable security situation and serious economic conditions in the region and by the recent crisis in Kosovo. In that regard, there remained a strong need for further enforcement of the rights of children. To that end, the Government cooperated with international organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The cooperation in question was now in the third stage of a master operating plan for the period 1999-2001, founded on the Basic Cooperation Agreement signed by the Government and UNICEF in 1994. UNICEF had also provided considerable assistance in addressing the needs of refugees, in particular children and women, during and after the recent Kosovo crisis.

7 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia fully supported the efforts made at the previous session of the Commission on Human Rights to take specific measures for the protection of children's rights, in order that the twenty-first century might become one of universal protection for those rights. It also supported the activities of the working groups preparing the two optional protocols to the Convention.

8 Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELA said that the initial report as before the Committee was fairly detailed. A large amount of data had been supplied regarding the status of children. However, although the report referred to criticism by some non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it was not very self-critical.

9 The Committee was pleased to note that the Government had begun considering the withdrawal of the reservation to article 9 of the Convention. Similarly, the establishment of an Ombudsman on Children's Rights was a welcome development. Although it had been stated that the national legislation had already been in conformity with the Convention prior to ratification, it was unclear whether any review of legislation had been conducted for the purpose of ensuring conformity. The implementation of children's rights had been entrusted to various specialized units within ministries and other subordinate bodies. The most important institution with regard to care for children was the Social Work Centre. The Centres appeared to be subordinated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which received appeals against decisions taken by them. She wondered whether the supervisory role and appeal-based duties of the Ministry were sufficient. Given the importance of the local level for children's participation in matters affecting them, the report did not give a clear indication of the role of local political and administrative bodies in the implementation of the Convention. Similarly, neither the report nor the written replies to the list of issues indicated whether there was one body responsible for coordinating policies for children across different sectors. By extension, there did not appear to be a national strategy for the evaluation, research and management of children's rights.

10. With reference to the overall allocations made for children's rights, the Convention stated that in relation to economic, social and cultural rights, States parties should undertake measures to the maximum extent of their available resources. However, no clear picture emerged of the resources available or the extent to which priority was given to children's rights. In assigning

priority for budgetary allocations, special attention should be paid to vulnerable groups such as disabled children, those living in institutions and those belonging to minority groups. That was particularly true in relation to Roma and Albanian girls. Information about budget allocations for international cooperation would also be appreciated.

11. Mr. FULCI said that the report contained useful information, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, with regard to health, education and basic national legislation. There was, however, a lack of disaggregated data in general, which impeded understanding of the actual situation with regard to children's rights in almost all areas covered by the Convention.

12. Concerning general measures of implementation, the report failed to mention international and bilateral aid received by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or the extent to which such cooperation facilitated the implementation of the Convention, for example, no concrete examples of technical cooperation programmes were provided. Relevant up-to-date information should therefore be supplied in both of those areas.

13. There was little or no indication of the relationship between the Government and NGOs. Although reference was made to the Association for the Protection of Children in Macedonia and the First Children Embassy in the World, other NGOs had stated that the Government had done little to involve the media in the dissemination of information relating to the Convention. Likewise, the majority of Macedonian children were unaware of the existence of the Convention or its principles. Further information on the matter would be welcome.

14. Mrs. SARDENBERG, said she agreed with the previous speakers that more specific information should be provided regarding the action taken by the Government to implement the Convention. There should be greater analysis of activities being conducted on the ground to implement the Convention fully.

15. The establishment of an Ombudsman on Children's Rights and the withdrawal of the reservation to article 9 of the Convention were both favourable developments, which gave a positive message regarding full implementation. However, the decision to establish the Office of Ombudsman on Children's Rights had been taken very recently, and the Ombudsman's exact position was unclear. Was the Office an independent one, and what political weight did it carry?

16. The Committee believed that the elaboration of reports was part of the implementation process. The initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had been compiled by an inter-ministerial group, although no detailed information had been provided about its preparation. Had seminars been planned and discussions conducted within civil society and through NGOs? One of the main negative aspects of the report concerned training. In many cases, it was difficult to assume that the national authorities were fully convinced of the thrust of the Convention, that children were entitled to special rights. Emphasis had been placed on legislation but children's rights were viewed as a simple emanation of human rights in general, or of parents' rights. Efforts were needed to change attitudes and traditional perceptions. Up-to-date information should therefore be provided on training for professionals working for and with children. In that regard, what was the approach of the "interactive learning" project?

Such a project could play an important role in disseminating the principles and provisions of the Convention to children and teachers in schools, which were the main vehicles for increasing awareness of the Convention.

17. Mr. DOEK welcomed the detailed written replies to the questions raised in the list of issues (CRC/C/Q/MAC/1). The new methods and techniques for caring for children with special needs, improved levels of care and highly qualified staff in orphanages clearly attested to the Government's commitment. However, information should be provided about their impact on children's situations. Like Mrs. Sardenberg, he would welcome further information on the independence of the Ombudsman on Children's Rights.

18. He would like to know the nature of the relationship between the State Committee on the Protection of the Rights of the Child and the Union for the Care and Education of Children. According to the written replies, the State Committee drafted and amended legislation. Those were parliamentary functions in other countries; did the Committee transmit proposals to Parliament or did it possess legal authority of its own?

19. With regard to the age of recruitment into the military, the information provided in the written reply to question 6 seemed contradictory. First it was stated that military service began at age 19, and later that drafting commenced at age 18 and even at 17 on the request of the future draftee. He would appreciate clarification in that regard.

20. Mr. RABAH noted that paragraph 4 of the report (CRC/C/8/Add.36) stated that the provisions of the Convention formed part of domestic legislation and were directly applicable, while paragraph 12 stated that the minimum age for admission to employment was 15 years. Was that in line with the Convention, which set the minimum age for employment at 18 years?

21. He did not consider the replies to the Committee's questions about the dissemination of the Convention to be sufficient, especially insofar as translating the Convention into minority languages was concerned. That activity should involve not only NGOs but State institutions and the media. Cooperation and coordination with NGOs should include the preparation of reports to be submitted to the Committee.

22. He asked whether the Social Work Centres existed throughout the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and whether they cooperated with other ministries besides the Ministry of Labour.

23. Mrs. MOKHUANE requested information about the interaction between children and the Government, which was required to ensure that children's rights were respected under the Convention. She asked to what extent children were involved in policy-making. Prior to the establishment of the Ombudsman on Children's Rights, had studies or surveys been carried out to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Convention?

24. Mrs. KARP asked what the practical impact of the Convention had been on the functioning of institutions. As the Social Work Centres were not child-specific, she wondered

whether the mandates of any institutions had been modified to include children's rights as set forth in the Convention. She would also like to know whether the procedures and staffing of organizations had been changed to reflect a child-rights-based approach.

25. Had the process of preparing the report produced ideas for amendments to legislation, institutions or policies? She wondered about the impact of budgetary and human resource constraints on care for children in need. How long did those children have to wait to receive assistance, and what criteria were used for determining which children were most in need? She would also like to know whether there were plans to address the general treatment of children under an umbrella forum or policy.

26. Mrs. RILANTONO asked how legislation relating to children's rights was enacted. According to the report, social protection was provided for children under 15 and full-time students up to 25. What would be the status of a child who had married before age 25 and was still a full-time student?

27. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in a personal capacity, asked whether the process of preparing the report had included press conferences and what means were used to inform the public in that regard. Did mechanisms exist for evaluating knowledge about the Convention, and were children aware of their rights? She would like to know the public's opinion on children's rights, in particular whether children were regarded as subjects of law.

The meeting was suspended at 11.05 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

28. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that there had been no intention, in the report, to dissimulate the problems his country faced in implementing the Convention. Since independence in 1991, the main responsibility for budgeting lay with the ministries, which included community-level branches. Each ministry allocated funding for children's issues, despite which there was still a shortfall for specific programmes. Over the previous 10 years, the country had experienced massive economic problems, partly due to the wars in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which had been offset to some extent by funds made available by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

29. Individual countries had also provided assistance in specific areas. UNICEF, whose joint programmes with the Government over the previous three years had amounted to \$5.8 million, was a long-standing partner in children's programmes. Some of the funds received had had to be reallocated to the refugee crisis or used for education, medical assistance and insurance.

30. Domestic legislation stipulated that medical assistance should be provided for children over 15 years of age, but it had been necessary to suspend that assistance because of the refugee crisis. Information on the criteria for determining allocation of funds was contained in the documents provided to the Committee. No specific sums were earmarked for children, who had always been considered the responsibility of the family. Although social assistance was offered to families in accordance with their income levels, it was still not satisfactory.

31 Although it had initially been thought that ministries' budgets would remain unchanged despite the announced budget cuts, the Kosovo crisis had caused the budget to be rescheduled. The pledges made by international donors held promise in that regard.

32 Discussions had been held with UNICEF over the past two years on the establishment of a coordinating body on children's rights, but other pressing issues had forced the subject into the background. The ongoing close cooperation with UNICEF had also helped to make the establishment of a coordinating body less urgent.

33 The Ministry of Justice was responsible for monitoring legislation relating to children's rights, and a working group was cooperating with UNICEF to finalize a Children's Act. He wondered whether the representative of UNICEF might take the floor to provide specific data on international assistance.

34 The CHAIRPERSON said that it was not the Committee's practice to hear specialized agencies during the discussion of a State party's report. However, the Committee would welcome information submitted by UNICEF on an informal basis.

35 Ms. LAZAROVA-TRAJKOVSKA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), replying to a question by Mrs. Tigerstedt-Tahtela on the right of appeal against decisions taken by Social Work Centres, said that the Centres issued first-level decisions and that appeals against those decisions were submitted to the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry had the power to overturn a Centre's decision. She noted that the right of appeal as a civil right was guaranteed under article 15 of the Constitution for citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as any person affected by a first-level decision issued by an administrative or public body or institution. However, the final decision did not rest with the Ministry of Labour. Dissatisfied persons could take the matter to the Supreme Court, if the Court's decision was considered unsatisfactory, the final appellate body was the Public Prosecutor's Office. It was clear from the foregoing that administrative protection was well covered by the law.

36 The Ministries of Labour, Urban Planning and Finance were structured differently from the other ministries in that their offices were decentralized, which explained their involvement in first-level appeals. With regard to the other ministries, appeals were raised in the second-level commission. For example, appeals against a rejection of an application for Macedonian nationality would be referred to the second-level commission and then to the Supreme Court.

37 In reply to a question by Mr. Fulci, she said the Ministry of Internal Affairs was working in close cooperation with NGOs; in fact, she would shortly be attending a meeting organized by one NGO on the rights of Romany children. Her ministry's work in that regard was transparent, and its files were open to examination by any NGO which justified a need to do so.

38 In response to a question by Mrs. Sardenberg about training with regard to children's rights, she said the 30 offices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs throughout the Republic disseminated information on the Convention and organized seminars on human rights, especially the rights of the child.

39. Ms. GROZDANOVA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said the Social Work Centres, established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, were public social protection institutions. They were responsible for establishing social protection projects in connection with the Law on Social Protection of Children and the Family Act, and for taking action in cases involving the criminal justice system. They were coordinated among themselves, not only by law, but because many of the cases covered were interrelated and dealt with the exercise of child and parental rights. The Inter-Municipal Social Work Centre of the City of Skopje included a separate service for marriage and family affairs, and most of its work focused on children. Local Social Work Centres sometimes advised on action to be taken with regard to a particular case.

40. Concerning the implementation of article 9 of the Convention, children's rights were regulated by the Family Act, which provided that all decisions regarding minors were taken in the child's best interests. Reality was somewhat different, as children were often separated from their parents against their will, which meant that both children and parents were deprived of their rights. In cases of separation or divorce, parents did not always fulfil their role, with spouses frequently using their children as a bargaining tool and neglecting their duty to provide for the children's physical and psychological development.

41. Children enjoyed the basic right to express their views and wishes, which was particularly important for teenagers. Employees in the Social Work Centres who dealt with children were well-educated and had had considerable experience in social policy projects organized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the cooperation of UNICEF; they tried in all cases to resolve issues in the children's best interests.

42. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that no centralized cooperation mechanism existed, but that the Social Work Centres cooperated fully with local NGOs on a case-by-case basis. As nearly one third of the country's population lived in the capital, Skopje, it was there that cooperative efforts were concentrated, although cooperation also took place in other large areas. Referring to Mr. Fulci's comment concerning financial assistance, he said that Italy, a major donor, had recently announced a contribution of \$1 billion to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

43. Mr. ILIEVSKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) noted that the country's economic crisis had been exacerbated by the escalation of the Kosovo crisis and that the Ministry of Education had been particularly affected by its need to absorb thousands of refugee children into all the educational levels, at considerable cost. It had been given valuable assistance in that regard by UNICEF, which had provided basic school equipment, and, together with the Ministry of Education and the State Pedagogical Institute, had conducted child-related activities and trained teachers.

44. Replying to a question concerning discrimination against minorities in education, he said that the Laws on Primary and Secondary Education provided all children with the right to education, whatever their religious, ethnic or other affiliation. Primary education was compulsory, while secondary education, although not compulsory, was accessible to all children. Pupils who failed to attend primary school regularly were counselled by pedagogical experts and employees of the Social Work Centres. Unfortunately, while there were cases of non-attendance

by Albanian and Turkish minorities, the worst offenders were Roma. The reasons for non-attendance and dropping-out, especially by girls, were linked to traditional beliefs, particularly among the Muslim population, which considered the education of girls to be a luxury.

45. Textbooks for Albanian and Turkish minorities had been published in their mother tongue and had been distributed free of charge to primary schools by the Ministry of Education. Coverage of secondary education for minorities was on the increase, a trend the Government was doing its utmost to encourage. The "Women and Children" project advocated appropriate treatment of women and children in society.

46. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that all national minorities received education in their mother tongue; the country was proud of its record with regard to mother-tongue education and textbooks. Romany children posed the greatest problem, but special efforts were being made to provide them with textbooks and extra lessons in their language.

47. Mr. TODOROV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), replying to a question by Mrs. Sardenberg concerning the Ombudsman on Children's Rights, said that the Office of the Ombudsman had been established two years previously and consisted of four deputies headed by the national Ombudsman. Its experience since its inception had demonstrated the need for work on specific areas. Given the many child-related issues that had arisen, it had been decided, after an extensive public debate in which a number of NGOs had taken part, that one of the deputies of the Office of the Ombudsman would work exclusively on children's issues.

48. The children's ombudsman system had been explained at length in a recent publication in Macedonian. The Ombudsman's responsibility covered matters pertaining only to State organs, not those brought before the courts, in which children had recourse to the justice system. He was not in possession of statistics relating to the system, as it had been in operation for only three months. There was, however, a children's ombudsman programme for the year 2000 with four specific objectives: to impart education on children's rights, to promote the exercise of children's rights, to organize visits by social workers from the Centres, and to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Macedonian legislation in comparison with the provisions of the international human rights instruments.

49. Regarding the role of the media in informing the population about the provisions of the Convention, there were several newspapers in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia dealing with children's issues. In addition, State television broadcast weekly live discussion shows in which children could put questions to a panel of experts on various topics. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a Macedonian translation of the Convention had been distributed to primary and secondary school pupils and a bilingual edition of the text had also been published. A project on technical cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the area of education was expected to be approved by the Government for implementation from the beginning of the next school year. The main aim of the project was to ensure that human rights were incorporated into the education process by providing teaching on international human rights instruments, particularly the Convention.

50. In reply to Mr. Fulci's question, several NGOs registered at the time the report had been written, in 1995-1996, had been involved in its preparation. Issues raised in the report had also been discussed with newer NGOs in preparation for the discussion of the report with the Committee. Representatives of three NGOs had been present at the informal meeting with the members of the Committee held the previous September and had given a press conference about the discussions.

51. Regarding military service, the Ministry of Defence registered future soldiers at the age of 17, however, up to the age of 18, they were subject only to health examinations and intelligence and psychological tests. The Constitution provided that no citizen under 18 could engage in active service in the armed forces, a provision that was fully respected in practice. A proposal was currently under consideration to professionalize the entire army by 2002, so that military service would no longer be compulsory.

52. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions on general principles, civil rights and freedoms, and family environment and alternative care.

53. Mr. FULCI said that, although the report stated that the principle of non-discrimination against minorities was contained in article 9 of the Constitution, that article did not deal explicitly with discrimination on the grounds of disability and ethnicity. According to independent sources, however, the human rights of certain minorities, such as Albanians, Roma and Vlachs, were not properly respected. He would like to know why so few Albanians were admitted to university. If the reason was the low standard of teaching in Albanian-language secondary schools, that was a problem that should be addressed. He also requested more information on policies and programmes implemented or envisaged to ensure genuine non-discrimination against ethnic Macedonians and Roma.

54. The registration of children at birth was essential for implementing children's rights, and the complex machinery in place for registering births had already been described. He asked what other policies had been developed to promote the registration of children born in remote rural communities, particularly Romany children.

55. Mr. DOEK, noting that the report contained information about the protection provided by the Criminal Code in cases of child abuse and neglect within the family, requested more information about the role of the Social Work Centres in that regard. He would like to know whether there was a reporting system for bringing such cases to the attention of the Social Work Centres. The Centre had the capacity to intervene in individual cases; he inquired whether any safeguards, other than the right to appeal against decisions made by the Centre, were in place to ensure that the rights of parents and children to family life and privacy were respected when such interventions took place. Was there any outside monitoring of the activities of the Centre? He would also like to know how cases of child abuse were prosecuted when one of the parents was the perpetrator of the crime. He asked whether child victims of abuse were called to testify in court or whether there were other means of obtaining statements from them. If police interviews were used for that purpose, he would like to know whether the police officers involved received special training. He asked whether campaigns were conducted to raise awareness not only of sexual abuse but also of physical and emotional abuse.

56. Paragraphs 120-124 of the report made little mention of foster care. He would like to know whether there was a comprehensive policy to promote foster care in cases where it was necessary.

57. Mrs. KARP endorsed Mr. Doek's question about a reporting system for cases of child abuse. She reiterated her previous question about the practical impact of the Convention on the activities of organizations working with children. She would also like to know how many children represented a typical caseload for a social worker. Information would be appreciated about the regular activities of the Children's Parliament: was it an effective forum for dialogue between children and the authorities and did it lead to real changes that benefited children?

58. Mrs. SARDENBERG said she was concerned at the fact that no ombudsman specifically for children existed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; children's issues were dealt with only by a deputy in the Office of the Ombudsman. Moreover, no information was given on whether the Ombudsman was an independent figure capable of changing people's attitudes with regard to children and promoting the idea of children as subjects of law. She suggested that a comprehensive national strategy for children should be developed in order to integrate all the different activities undertaken. There appeared to be problems in enforcing legislation: greater efforts were needed to transform good intentions into real change for the benefit of children. The Convention should be used as a tool for opening debate on the subject, making it possible for issues such as discrimination against minorities to be properly acknowledged and more directly addressed.

59. Regarding the issue of birth registration, particularly of Romany children, little information had been given about the failure to register children born at home. Although the fact that 95 per cent of births were now assisted by qualified people had probably led to an increase in the birth registration rate, a significant proportion of the Romany population did not have citizenship rights. Ensuring that people had citizenship was, however, fundamental to implementing the principle of children as subjects of law. She would also like to know how the principle of children's participation was put into effect in society at large.

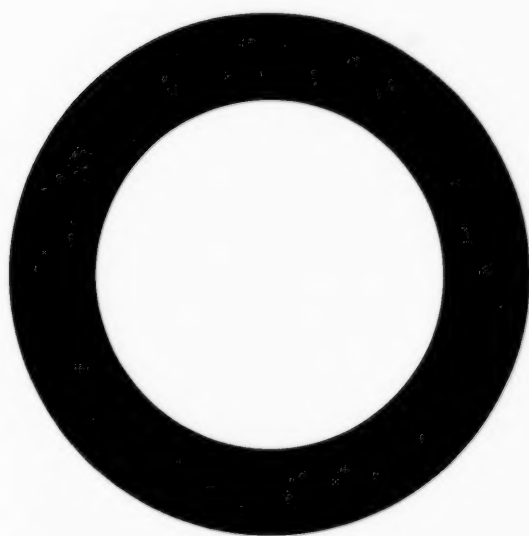
60. Mr. RABAH asked whether special meeting centres existed for parents who were separated from their children. Information about the procedures governing foster care and the measures in place for monitoring it would be appreciated. He would also like to know whether practical mechanisms existed to enable children to express their views to society and participate in public life, particularly at the local level.

61. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ, referring to a question by Mr. Fulci, asked whether it would be possible to update the Constitution in order to remove discrepancies between it and the various human rights instruments. Further to a question by Mrs. Sardenberg, she asked how many Romany children lacked citizenship rights as a result of not being registered at birth. Regarding the participation of children in the decision-making process, she would appreciate information about how decisions were made at the local level. She would also like to know whether Parliament delegated responsibilities to elected bodies in municipalities, in order that they might consult children about local issues affecting them.

62. Mr. DOEK requested information about international adoption in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He noted that if a child's parents were separated, the Social Work Centre was able to restrict contact between the child and the parent with whom the child did not live, whereas in most countries, such decisions were made by the courts. He would like to know what criteria were used by the Social Work Centre in deciding to limit contact between a parent and a child and whether parents were able to challenge the decision.

63. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that the Social Work Centre appeared to have a very broad mandate and asked whether any independent evaluation of its work had been carried out. She would also appreciate further information about the situation of children belonging to the Vlach minority group.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.





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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 598th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday 17 January 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. OUEDRAOGO

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GE.00-40380 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (CRC/C/8/Add.36)
(HRI/CORE/1/Add.83; CRC/C/Q/MAC/1; written replies to questions raised in the list of issues (CRC/C/A/MAC/1) (document distributed in the meeting room in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia resumed their places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. TODOROV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) agreed that the principle of non-discrimination as related to certain national minorities' access to higher education had not yet been fully applied. He referred the Committee members to the figures provided on the primary and secondary education of various ethnic groups and on higher education staffing in the written replies to question 26 of the list of issues (CRC/C/Q/MAC/1). Furthermore, the Government had established a policy of positive discrimination to facilitate national minorities' access to higher education.

3. From a legal point of view, the principle of non-discrimination was enshrined in article 9 of the Constitution and had been incorporated into all the laws relating to children's rights. Legislation in the areas in question was applied on the basis of that fundamental principle. Consequently, revision of the legislative framework was not necessary. However, if certain laws or acts were believed to be discriminatory, individuals or groups could apply to the Constitutional Court for a remedy in defence of their rights. As to the compatibility of the constitutional provision relating to non-discrimination and article 2 of the Convention, the list of possible forms of discrimination as contained in that provision was not exhaustive and all citizens were equal before the Constitution and the law.

4. It was true that girls were discriminated against as far as their right to education was concerned, but the Government was taking specific measures to correct that situation. Secondary education was not compulsory and it was left up to the parents to decide. The State had, for a long time, tried to promote secondary education for girls to counteract the traditional view upheld by some ethnic groups that girls did not need to go beyond primary education.

5. Ms. LAZAROVA-TRAJKOVSKA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the State was paying close attention to the issue of children born at home because it was aware that the right to be registered at birth and to have a nationality were fundamental rights. The proportion of children born at home had fallen from 12 per cent in 1993 to 4 per cent in 1998. Around 245 local offices, mainly responsible for registering the births, marriages and deaths of Macedonians and foreigners, had been opened in rural areas. In addition, the Government had published an information pamphlet for parents on the birth registration process. In 1997, 769 children had been born at home in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia out of a total of 34,220 registered births.

6. Home births were not solely among the Romany minority. In any event, most Roma lived in urban areas and therefore the women generally gave birth in hospitals. The question regarding the citizenship rights of the Roma people had probably been prompted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report on the subject, but it should be noted that at a meeting with UNICEF the latter had admitted that the figures quoted in the report were incorrect.

7. The provisions relating to the prevention of statelessness under the 1992 nationality law dated back to a 1928 law of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Macedonian citizenship could be conferred upon a child even if his parents were stateless or unknown. If it was later discovered that the parents had another nationality, other procedures were applied. Macedonian nationality had never been refused to any child born on the territory of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, whether the parents were known or not. The Government had published an information pamphlet for persons without a nationality.

8. Ms. GROZDANOVA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) explained that, if children were victims of abuse or exploitation, Social Work Centres were authorized to receive complaints of such abuse from family members, medical centres, the police or schools and to act on that basis. A group of specialists then studied the case in the best interests of the child and organized meetings between the parties involved. If the child had been the victim of psychological abuse he could be removed from his environment and placed in a foster home or an institution. In most cases the abuser would be brought before the courts to face criminal charges and, depending on the seriousness of the case, parents could be deprived of their parental rights.

9. Mr. PENDAROVSKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that a Ministry of the Interior division with a predominantly female staff monitored the abuse of minors. An under-age victim could only be accompanied to a police station by a family member (excluding the abuser) and could only make a statement in the presence of a social worker. A preliminary report was prepared and transmitted to the government procurator's office and the examining court. The division's female staff was highly qualified and the previous year a three-week seminar had been organized for them locally and abroad with the assistance of colleagues in Germany and the United States. The Government believed that the police should maintain a low profile where victims were concerned.

10. Ms. VELICKOVSKA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that a child could be called upon to testify in court but that the situation varied depending on whether he was the perpetrator or the victim of the offence. An adolescent who was guilty of an offence could be punished with a disciplinary measure or placed in a detention centre for juvenile delinquents. A special procedure was followed for adolescents who had been accused. The parents or legal guardian of a juvenile delinquent could be held responsible, a possibility not envisaged under the Convention.

11. Whether or not a child victim testified depended on whether the abuser was a parent of the victim or another adult. If a parent had committed the offence, the child was not required to testify. If the perpetrator was another adult and the child had suffered damage, the giving of evidence should not pose a threat to the child's physical or psychological well-being. The statement must be given in the presence of an educationalist or some other specialist, depending

on the maturity of the child. If the family was experiencing problems, then family therapy could be recommended, and every effort was to be made to prevent a child from becoming involved in his parents' divorce proceedings.

12. Ms. GROZDANOVA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that in keeping with legislation relating to children in hazardous social circumstances, the Social Work Centre was responsible for choosing a foster home after careful study of applicant families. A campaign was under way to increase the number of potential foster families. New social laws with provisions relating to the use and monitoring of foster homes had been adopted to achieve the best results from placement in foster families or institutions. With respect to a social worker's typical caseload, the lack of staff, scarce financial resources and the increasing number of children in need of social assistance did pose a problem.

13. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government, in cooperation with UNICEF, intended to define a national strategy as part of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. As to local autonomy, a new decentralization policy was being framed in the areas of education, health and taxation in cooperation with the Council of Europe. It was also important for children to participate in cultural and sporting activities conducted at primary and secondary school levels.

14. Ms. GROZDANOVA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that on rare occasions meetings could be organized between parents and children who had been separated, but only in the Social Work Centres. Under Macedonian family law, foreigners could adopt Macedonian children. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy authorized such adoptions based on the advice of the Social Work Centres, whose activities were supervised by that Ministry and by the Institute of Social Affairs.

15. Mr. TODOROV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) explained that the Office of the Ombudsman on Children's Rights had been integrated into the Office of the Ombudsman for organizational reasons. The Vlachs represented only 0.4 per cent of the population and were extremely well integrated into society. Vlach children had the choice of studying the Vlach language at school and every possible measure had been taken to preserve the cultural, linguistic and religious particularities of the Vlachs, who were represented in Parliament and in the Government.

16. As to the Children's Parliament, the result of a non-governmental organization (NGO) initiative, the original idea had been to bring children and adults together in an assembly to discuss problems affecting young people. A document resulting from the children's summit held in Skopje in November 1999 had been published and would be distributed to the Committee members.

17. Mrs. KARP asked whether there was a body responsible for studying and following up on the proposals made by the Children's Parliament.

18. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that contact had been made between the Government and the relevant NGOs. The new national strategy would contain provisions reflecting the observations of the Children's Parliament.

19. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked whether measures had been taken to reduce the mortality rate of children whose mothers were over 40. She wondered whether studies had been conducted to evaluate the cost of abortion in relation to the use of contraception, as well as the psychological health of adolescent and young women who had had abortions. She would also appreciate information on the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among adolescents. When would the bill on breastfeeding be passed? Had measures been taken to bring an end to discrimination against 15 to 18-year-olds in terms of social security coverage and what progress had been made in retraining doctors?

20. Mrs. RILANTONO requested information on the compulsory medical insurance scheme, especially with regard to children between 15 and 18 years of age. Had measures been taken to sensitize less-educated mothers about breastfeeding? She would like to know when the legislation authorizing abortion had been passed.

21. Mr. DOEK said he would like to know the number of children who had been adopted by foreigners and whether the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. He wondered whether the children of unemployed parents, especially those who lived apart, were covered by the medical insurance scheme and whether there was an overall policy for protecting refugee children. He asked how many persons benefited from humanitarian assistance. Turning to justice for minors, he inquired whether juvenile delinquents were guaranteed the full range of legal safeguards and whether they were provided with legal aid.

22. Mr. RABAH asked whether juvenile courts could make custody decisions regarding children whose parents were separating or whether only the Social Work Centres had the authority to do so. With respect to intercountry adoption, he would like to know if bilateral agreements had been signed with neighbouring States such as Greece, Bulgaria and Albania. Furthermore, could the delegation provide reasons for the high drop-out rate in schools?

23. Mr. FULCI said that it could not be considered that the general provisions relating to the principle of non-discrimination, as contained in article 9 of the Constitution of the State party, adequately protected children with special needs, particularly since, unlike the Convention, the article did not make reference to ethnic origin or the disabilities those children might have. Against that background, he wondered what mechanisms had been put in place to protect children against all forms of discrimination.

24. As to the promotion of breastfeeding, mothers should be informed that diseases such as tuberculosis could be transmitted through breastfeeding. He asked for further information on the situation of unaccompanied and stateless refugee children and wondered what steps, especially legal ones, had been taken to protect their rights. With respect to the economic exploitation of children, he asked whether the Government intended to ratify the relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) convention.

25. Mrs. SARDENBERG requested further information on the enforcement of children's right of association and wondered what had been done to abolish corporal punishment at school and at home.

26. Mrs. KARP inquired about the privatization of health services for children and wondered whether the fact that adolescents did not have free access to contraceptives helped to augment the number of abortions. She would also like to know if adolescents who were outside the school system benefited from free counselling and health services.

27. Mr. DOEK inquired what steps the Government intended to take to issue birth certificates for refugee children who had been born in the territory of the State party in order to clarify the nationality issue.

28. The CHAIRPERSON said it was incumbent on the Government to encourage parents to ensure that their children received secondary education. She wondered whether mechanisms were in place to make sure that parents did indeed enrol their children in primary school, which was compulsory, and recommended that measures be taken to promote the education of Romany children. In addition, she asked whether a system had been established to address young people's psychological health and the prevention of violence among adolescents.

The meeting was suspended at 4.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.40 p.m.

29. Ms. BECANOVIC (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the health insurance scheme, based on the principles of solidarity and mutuality, covered loss of income as a result of illness or pregnancy and included employers' contributions. Medical care and drugs were reimbursed and only a small fraction of the cost remained to be covered by beneficiaries, amounting to 5 per cent for persons under 18; however, there was full reimbursement for children under 14. Health insurance was compulsory and covered virtually the entire population. Children were covered by their parents' insurance benefits up to age 18 and age 26 for students. Foreigners could benefit from the regular scheme if they lived and worked in the country, while unemployed persons were covered by a Ministry of Labour and Social Policy fund. Similarly, persons who did not fall into any of the above categories, and who therefore were not automatically covered, could apply for coverage under the fund. A 1991 law had made it possible to establish private health clinics; once these clinics signed an agreement with the health insurance office reimbursements could be made under the same conditions as those applying to public health insurance schemes.

30. The 1970 abortion law was still in force. Nine prevention and public health programmes were under way, focusing on the protection of mother and child, regular medical examinations in schools, vaccination, and prevention of certain diseases such as AIDS and tuberculosis. The Ministry of Health had also created a breastfeeding support committee as well as a group which was responsible for drafting a law on the nutrition of newborns and had launched a campaign in that regard. With the help of UNICEF, the Ministry had also published, in Macedonian, Turkish and Albanian, pamphlets on all aspects of pregnancy, childbirth and nutrition of the newborn.

31. Ms. ZAFIROVSKA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that every woman had free access to the contraception method of her choice. The country had an extensive network of family planning centres, but recent data showed that girls under 19 rarely visited them, which would partly explain the alarmingly high number of abortions. However, pharmacists and doctors were, no doubt, partly to blame as well. That was why so much emphasis was being placed on improving consultation services in family planning centres, while

respecting the need for confidentiality between patient and doctor, and the training of practitioners. A new module on STDs and family planning counselling had been introduced in their university curriculum. Under the "Healthy School" programme, a number of lectures had been organized in secondary schools on STDs, drugs, sex and mental health.

32. With regard to children suffering from psychological disturbances, most schools in the larger cities had a specially trained psychologist. Two specialized institutions - the Mental Health Institute and the University of Psychiatry - each had a department dedicated to treating children.

33. Drug abuse affected only a small percentage of the population; alarmingly, however, a growing number of adolescents were beginning to take soft drugs as early as 14 and intravenously as of 16 years. A multisectoral committee had been created to combat consumption of and trafficking in illegal substances. It had recently launched a widescale awareness-raising campaign on the dangers of drug addiction, especially the risk of AIDS transmission through intravenous drug use. Only a small number of AIDS cases were recorded each year and, to date, there had been only one case of AIDS transmission through breastfeeding.

34. Ms. GROZDANOVA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Hague Convention on intercountry adoption had already been ratified and the European Convention on the Adoption of Children was being considered with a view to being ratified in the near future.

35. Mr. PENDAROVSKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that 8,550 foreigners had been granted refugee status, of whom 70 per cent were estimated to be women and 45-50 per cent children. There were thought to be roughly 3,000 illegal refugees. The Government was cooperating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to repatriate Kosovar refugees by 31 March 2000. There was reason to think that Albania and some other countries in the region were being used as bases for the traffic in children, but over the past four years there had been not a single proven case in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

36. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the influx of refugees weighed heavily on the economy of a country in transition, which had absorbed over 330,000 refugees, representing 20 per cent of the population. The Government had decided to tackle the situation with the help of UNHCR, UNICEF and the hundred or so NGOs which had been in the country since the crisis had erupted.

37. A vast national campaign against dropping out from school had been initiated and over the past 10 years the secondary school attendance rate among Albanian-speaking children had increased significantly.

38. Mr. TODOROV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the rules of administrative procedure were applicable to Social Work Centres by virtue of article 14 of the Family Act, which meant that any decision taken by the Centres could be appealed before a body of second instance. In 95 per cent of cases that body was the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The decision handed down at the end of the proceedings could be contested before the Supreme Court, the highest judicial body in the country.

39. In accordance with the Criminal Code, juvenile delinquents of over 14 and under 16 years could only be sentenced to disciplinary, educational or institutional measures. The decision could specify the offence and the grounds for the sentence but the minor would not be charged with the offence. Minors between 16 and 18 years could be sentenced to imprisonment not exceeding 10 years. Young adults, namely persons of between 18 and 21 years, could benefit from the same special treatment accorded to juvenile delinquents if it was believed that they were not sufficiently mature emotionally and intellectually.

40. Ms. GORGIEVA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said she wished to dispel any misunderstanding surrounding the principle of non-discrimination. The relevant legislative provisions were probably the most frequently applied of all. The Constitution and domestic legislation, especially with respect to education, health, public service and the administration of justice for minors, covered all forms of discrimination against which children and adults should be protected. The doubts expressed by some Committee members with respect to the effective implementation of the Convention were unfounded, as the Convention was an integral part of domestic law and thus directly applicable by the courts of law.

41. Mr. ILIEVSKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that primary and secondary school children were allowed to found associations, for instance environmental protection associations. Representatives from several schools could even pool their efforts to work on a particular issue. Corporal punishment and physical and psychological violence against children were illegal. Teachers found guilty of such acts could be subject to disciplinary action at the school level. However, no complaint of corporal punishment had ever been lodged with the courts.

42. Ms. LAZAROVA-TRAJKOVSKA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that from the start of the influx of refugees, the authorities had been registering children born on the Republic's territory. By 13 January 2000, close to 1,000 children born of refugee parents had been registered and a birth certificate issued for each one. The problem of non-registration of births, often due to the fact that mothers were undocumented, rarely arose: there had been only six recorded cases.

43. The CHAIRPERSON noted that a number of questions that had been raised by Committee members remained unanswered, especially those concerning the prevention of violence among young people, the way in which the report had been prepared, the dissemination of the Convention in the country and the State party's position with respect to the new concept of the child as a subject of law. Did the authorities of the State party intend to ratify the ILO Convention on the worst forms of child labour? Did the country have a service responsible for educating mothers?

44. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether the policy whereby families were encouraged not to have more than three children did not constitute discrimination against a fourth or fifth child.

45. Mrs. MOKHUANE said she would like to know how the dignity and autonomy of disabled children were guaranteed considering that most related services were experiencing severe financial difficulties. Did the State authorities intend to subscribe to the rules governing

equal opportunities for the disabled? She wondered how disabled people were viewed by society and whether disabled children were subjected to sexual violence more often than were other children.

46. Ms. BECANOVIC (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that even in rural areas young mothers received at least three post-natal visits and that mothers were educated under a special programme. Due to the lack of resources, two programmes had unfortunately had to be suspended, one relating to family planning and the other to children's health. However, the main thrust of the programmes had been reintegrated into the work carried out by nurses and doctors treating patients in primary health-care centres. A group of NGOs had organized a workshop for Romany adolescents and, in fact, the proportion of young Romany mothers was substantially the same as for the rest of the population. All institutions for the disabled had a medical service, and disabled children living with their families experienced no discrimination in terms of access to health care. The authorities attached high priority to ensuring that public places were equipped with facilities for the disabled.

47. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), turning to the preparation and presentation of the report by the authorities, said that the relevant ministries had been asked to complete a questionnaire and NGOs concerned with children's issues had been contacted. The ministries responsible for implementing the Convention worked completely openly. Finally, the resolution relating to population policy in no way discriminated against families with more than three children.

48. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said that the Committee was aware of the economic problems the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia faced and was therefore well impressed with the competence of the delegation, although a certain lack of experience in dealing with an international body such as the Committee could be detected. She was still persuaded that there was serious discrimination against the most disadvantaged sectors of the population. She urged the authorities to review domestic legislation in order to make it fully compatible with the Convention, to adopt a holistic approach to children's rights and to establish a global strategy for implementing the Convention. In addition, persons working with children should be trained in the principles laid down in the Convention. Lastly, greater attention should be paid to Romany children, especially in regard to their integration into secondary schools.

49. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) thanked the members of the Committee for the quality of the dialogue and restated his Government's determination to implement all the Convention's provisions in spite of the country's difficult economic circumstances.

50. The CHAIRPERSON welcomed the fruitful discussions that had taken place between the delegation and the Committee and the acceptance by the State party of the amendment to article 43 of the Convention which would increase the Committee's membership from 10 to 18.

The meeting rose at 6 05 p.m.



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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 599th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 18 January 2000, at noon

Chairperson: Mrs. OUEDRAOGO

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The meeting was called to order at noon

THIRD WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION,
XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE: DISCUSSION WITH THE
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

1. The CHAIRPERSON welcomed Ms. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and said that the Committee appreciated the opportunity to discuss with the High Commissioner recent and future developments in human rights in the context of the United Nations system.
2. Ms. ROBINSON (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) congratulated Mrs. Ouedraogo on her election as Chairperson of the Committee and welcomed Mrs. Rilantono as the Committee's newest member. She looked forward to discussing ways in which the Committee might contribute to the forthcoming Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.
3. She commended the Committee for its efforts to reduce the backlog of reports, which had required significant changes in its working methods. Its decision to begin preparing general comments was also a welcome development. Since her discussion with the Committee at its twenty-first session, she had been able to mobilize resources for that purpose through the generosity of the Hilton Foundation. In preparing its general comments the Committee would also have the full support of the staff of the High Commissioner's Office, particularly within the context of the Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
4. She thanked the Chairperson of the Committee for her participation in the technical assistance mission to Haiti in December 1999 under the Plan of Action, with cooperation from the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Civilian Mission in Haiti. The mission had reinforced the determination of the Government of Haiti to give renewed effort and attention to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Haiti.
5. Donor support for the Plan of Action had enabled her Office to provide the Committee with additional Secretariat support. She had requested donors to extend their support for the Convention and the Committee, within the framework of the Annual Appeal 2000, and she hoped that the Committee would support her drive to raise the funds needed to finance activities in that area.
6. Racism, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance were at the root of many of the world's recent and more cruel conflicts. Children were among those who suffered most severely the consequences of ethnic discrimination and were also the most innocent victims of the conflicts it provoked. Children held the key to changing the future. If children could be freed from discrimination, as called for in article 2 of the Convention, the greatest possible contribution would have been made to the prevention of human rights abuses of any other type, as the children of today were the adults of tomorrow. The forthcoming World Conference, to be

held in August 2001 in South Africa, was intended to provide the international community with an opportunity to find a new vision for the new century, to review its thinking and to renew its commitment to the total eradication of racism.

7. However, the success of the Conference depended on the full support of all the key actors. The Commission on Human Rights, in resolution 1999/78, and the General Assembly, in resolution 54/154, had called for the preparatory process to involve representatives of all United Nations human rights mechanisms, and other treaty bodies were already considering the form their contributions would take. The Committee's work and experience would provide a strong basis for exploring the relationship between racial discrimination and obstacles to children's enjoyment of their human rights. Two of the seven objectives defined for the Conference, relating to implementation of existing instruments and recommendations for action-oriented measures to combat racism, were areas in which the Committee on the Rights of the Child might make a valuable contribution.

8. The open-ended sessional working group of the Commission on Human Rights had highlighted the effective role that education could play in promoting the participation of racially disadvantaged groups in society, the impact of discrimination in its various forms and the particular vulnerability of those who were subjected to discrimination on grounds of both gender and ethnicity. The plight of girls in that regard should be of particular concern.

9. It was clear that there were many possible areas relating to the Conference where child rights would be of significance. She would welcome suggestions from the Committee as to its possible role in helping to prepare the Conference and any assistance that her Office might provide in that regard.

10. Mr. FULCI said that through his experience in other forums he had come to admire the High Commissioner's extensive work and courage in the face of many challenges and difficulties. The Committee had found itself in the unfortunate position of having an average of 50 initial and second periodic reports to consider annually. However, it was unable to tackle more than 24 reports per year, which had set it back two years and had also undermined its credibility.

11. As President of the Economic and Social Council, he intended to bring the matter to the attention of Foreign Ministers. The situation called for amendment of article 43 of the Convention to increase the membership of the Committee to 18, which would require acceptance of the amendment by 120 States parties by 2001, ahead of the Committee's next elections. The Committee would therefore appreciate any efforts which the High Commissioner might make to expedite the process by urging the 49 States which had not yet accepted the amendment to do so.

12. The Committee welcomed the provision of additional Secretariat support, and particularly appreciated the excellent work of the Committee's Secretary. He pointed out that the Committee had not been able to begin preparing general comments because of its heavy workload. With regard to the High Commissioner's request for the Committee to participate in the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, he urged her to consider the fact that, in addition to the backlog with which Committee members had to contend they had outside commitments too.

13. Mrs. RILANTONO endorsed the High Commissioner's comments about children being society's future. Psychosocial changes had a significant impact on children's lives and should be taken into account in their holistic development.

14. Certain communities were unfortunately marginalized by both discrimination and the rapid technological advances of the modern world. An important way of combating such marginalization was to contribute to children's personality development, teach them social tolerance and ensure their right to education, as set forth in articles 28 and 29 of the Convention.

15. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that the High Commissioner's visits always brought with them good news and new ideas. She welcomed the financial support which had been promised for the drafting of the general comments and for the Plan of Action. The World Conference against Racism was an important initiative which provided a new opportunity to reframe the debate on racism and discrimination in the light of political and other changes in the world.

16. She wished to underscore the possible global impact and holistic and multisectoral effects of the Conference on children's lives. It was vital for the Committee to participate in all phases of preparation for the Conference, in particular by focusing on education and preventive strategies.

17. With regard to the Committee's contribution, the Conference should be placed on the Committee's agenda, especially in view of the forthcoming five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing + 5) and the importance of girl-child issues. The Committee might begin by intensifying its discussions with States parties on article 2 of the Convention, which was one of the basic principles of the Convention to which all the others were linked, and by furnishing concrete solutions to related problems, including the drafting of country-specific recommendations. The Committee might also make a worthwhile contribution to the study on the effects of racial discrimination on the children of members of minorities, in particular those of migrant workers requested by the General Assembly. She asked whether dates for regional preparatory meetings for the World Conference against Racism had been set, and said she trusted that the High Commissioner would keep the Committee informed of further developments.

18. Mr. DOEK said he considered Mr. Fulci's concerns to constitute an extra challenge to the Committee to step up its efforts. There was evidence that the more aware children became of the adult world, the more intolerant they became. While the Committee would, of course, represent them at the World Conference against Racism, he wondered whether there were any plans to invite children to attend. He drew attention to the need for a treaty-body coordination mechanism to avoid duplication and optimize input. The Committee might also produce a compilation of its work on non-discrimination issues. A general comment on article 2 might be a heavy task in view of the time constraints the Committee was facing. However, as delegations invariably emphasized the importance of education in changing society's attitude to ethnic minorities and foreigners, the Committee might prepare a general comment on article 29 of the Convention, concerning the content of education, providing concrete examples of human rights education in various countries.

19. Mr. RABAH asked what role the High Commissioner envisaged for the Committee in combating racism and related intolerance. Were there contributions it might make, apart from its recommendations to the delegations of States parties?

20. Ms. ROBINSON (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) expressed her appreciation not only of Committee members' suggestions, but of their sense of commitment to the World Conference against Racism. She was aware of members' workload and outside commitments, as referred to by Mr. Fulci, and thanked them for making additional efforts to participate actively in the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1999. She hoped Mr. Fulci would use his good offices, as President of the Economic and Social Council to seek support for the increase in the Committee's membership and greater Secretariat assistance as proposed in the Plan of Action.

21. The Committee's involvement in the World Conference would exemplify the significant role played by the treaty bodies. The Committee's contribution might highlight the importance of the holistic development of the child, emphasized by Mrs. Rilantono, as many children were born into situations of deprivation, discrimination and intolerance. She had already taken steps to implement Mrs. Sardenberg's suggestion that the holistic approach to children's development should be linked to the "Beijing + 5" meeting. It was essential for the Committee to intensify its discussion of article 2, possibly through a general comment, as Mr. Doek had suggested. Given the Committee's time constraints, the Secretariat might assist in gathering material.

22. In reply to Mr. Doek's question concerning a coordination mechanism, she said that the chairpersons of all the treaty bodies would meet to determine their respective approaches, thereby enhancing their overall impact. The Committee might contribute by stressing the importance of children in the context of xenophobia and racism. While she endorsed Mr. Doek's suggestion that children should be invited to participate in the Conference, she was not in a position to guarantee it. The experiment had not been entirely successful during the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention, at which the Committee had learned the hard way that children needed to be listened to in a particular manner. She could, however, suggest that States parties should include children, who were often victims of xenophobia and racism, in their delegations.

23. The treaty bodies must seize the opportunity of the World Conference against Racism to launch a vibrant, worldwide protest against that particular evil which, far from abating, was manifesting itself in new ways in many countries. While active discussions were under way, it was too early to say when the regional preparatory meetings would begin.

24. Mrs. KARP said that, given the consensus that education was a vital tool for the eradication of the phenomena the Conference would address, the Office of the High Commissioner might contribute to reflection on the application of technical assistance for human rights to practical problems. What was important was not the teaching of human rights per se, but the methodology used in preparing teachers for the task. Messages and slogans did not apprise the public of daily human rights violations, of which racial discrimination was a constant.

25. Mr. FULCI asked what concrete action the High Commissioner would recommend with regard to poverty eradication, an area that lent itself to specific measures. He wondered whether one such measure would be not only to alleviate some countries' debt, but also to invest in children the funds thus released?

26. Mrs. SARDENBERG asked whether the World Conference against Racism would have the same format as its predecessor, whether it would result in a declaration, and what means would be used to involve the private sector and the media.

27. Ms. ROBINSON (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said she agreed with Mrs. Karp about the need for participation and empowerment as an important element of human rights education and welcomed Mr. Doek's suggestion of a general comment on article 2 of the Convention. In regional conferences her Office focused on comparing approaches to human rights education, and it had issued a manual for teachers. The Committee could perhaps contribute to the ongoing efforts of her Office to improve the manual's quality. She firmly supported Mr. Fulci's idea that debt-relief funds should be invested in children

28. Replying to Mrs. Sardenberg, she said the World Conference against Racism would produce a declaration and a plan of action; the Committee might wish to help her Office determine the shape of that declaration. One day of the Conference, 1 September 2001, had already been set aside for statements by non-governmental organizations, and measures were in place to harness media cooperation. She welcomed the suggestion that States parties should be requested to include children in their delegations. She trusted that the Chairperson would make a contribution to the meeting of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies.

29. The CHAIRPERSON observed that the High Commissioner, as Secretary-General of the World Conference against Racism, had taken note of the Committee members' views. The Committee would continue to discuss the content of its contribution and would decide on the precise theme of its general comment on article 2. It looked forward to further discussion of new approaches with the High Commissioner.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

